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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000337

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TANZANIAN FM DELIVERS SADC REPORT TO LESOTHO

REF: MASERU 258 AND PREVIOUS

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¶1. Summary: On June 11, Tanzanian Foreign Minister Membe, in his capacity as representative of the Chairperson of SADC's Troika on Politics, Defense, and Security, delivered a much anticipated report to Lesotho on the country's contested February 2007 national election. The Troika's recommendations, however, merely stated an obvious need for dialogue, for measures to improve upon the Lesotho's Mixed Member Proportional Model prior to future elections, and for legislated fixes to prohibit manipulation of the model. The opposition will no doubt be disappointed that SADC has failed to address its immediate grievances, while the GOL will look to the report as a means to move beyond the impasse and return to governance issues. How the opposition reacts to the report, particularly with its boisterous supporters, will define the next chapter in this saga. End Summary.

¶2. The Foreign Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, Bernard Membe, arrived in Lesotho on Sunday, June 10 to deliver a long-awaited report by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Troika on Politics, Defense, and Security regarding Lesotho's contested February 2007 elections and subsequent distribution of parliamentary seats. Membe met on June 11 with Lesotho's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister, and leaders of political parties. Although Membe met with members of the Maseru diplomatic corps during a SADC Ministerial in March, as did a SADC Organ Troika delegation in April, there are no indications that Membe planned to hold such a briefing on this trip. He is expected to depart Lesotho the evening of June 11.

¶3. The SADC Organ Troika effort is the result of a decision made in Dar-es-Salaam on March 29 at a SADC Extraordinary Summit. The Summit had agreed to field a Ministerial Assessment Mission to Lesotho in light of an unresolved political impasse, including a debilitating work stoppage, that followed an otherwise peaceful February election. Leading opposition parties have contested the governing party's alliance with the rump leadership of small opposition party and the Independent Electoral Commission's subsequent distribution of National Assembly seats which accorded the governing LCD an ample majority and retention of government power (Note: The leading opposition party, the ABC, also formed a similar alliance for election purposes. End Note). According to a copy of the main report and executive summary obtained late on June 11, the SADC Organ Troika made the following recommendations:

Begin Text of "SADC Ministerial Troika Recommendations to the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation:"

i) Considering the overarching nature and far-reaching political

and security implications of the above findings and the suggested recommendations, it is recommended that:

ii) The Chairperson of the Organ in consultation with the TROIKA of the Organ should urge the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho to initiate a formal political dialog with a view to resolve the political problems between the opposition parties and the ruling party.

iii) SADC should facilitate the internal political dialogue.

iv) SADC may wish to nominate one of its "imminent Persons" from the Former Presidents to facilitate and supervise the internal political dialogue process.

v) MMP (Embassy Note: "Mixed Member Proportional") electoral model external experts in combination with people who have a full Lesotho political background should be engaged to facilitate the review of the model.

vi) SADC should urge all political stakeholders to respect the outcome of the democratic elections and address their existing political differences peacefully through dialogue.

vii) A formal request should be made by SADC and the Government of Lesotho to UNDP and the German and USA Governments for financial and technical assistance.

viii) The process for internal dialogue in Lesotho should start immediately to pre-empt the possibility of repeated waves of tension.

ix) SADC should urge the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho to put in place a specific law and regulations aimed to protect the spirit and intent of the MMP model as proposed by the SADC election observer mission report.

x) SADC should implore the Government of Lesotho to promulgate legislation aimed specifically to regulate the formulation of

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alliances and coalitions inside and outside parliament and during and between elections.

End Text (Note: Recommendations v, ix, and x appeared in the Main Report, but not in the Executive Summary. End Note).

14. Comment: The SADC report on Lesotho's elections has been the subject of intense speculation and rumors in the Mountain Kingdom over the last two months, including anticipation by some opposition members that SADC would recommend retroactive redistribution of parliamentary seats. As expected by more realistic observers, however, the report merely rehashed the history of Lesotho's electoral process, the allocation of seats, and various election-related developments. The recommendations state the obvious need for dialogue, for measures to improve upon the MMP model prior to future elections, and for legislated fixes to prohibit manipulation of the model by using proxy party alliances. The opposition will no doubt be disappointed that SADC has failed to address its immediate grievances, while the GOL will look to the report as a means to move beyond the impasse and return to governance issues. How the opposition reacts to the report, particularly with its boisterous supporters, will define the next chapter in this saga. End Comment.  
MURPHY